

Domestic Animal Services Advisory Committee**Agenda**

Wednesday, October 21, 2026

6:00 pm

2800 N. Horseshoe Dr., Naples, FL 34104

Growth Management Community Development,

Conference Rooms 609/610

NOTICE: Persons wishing to speak on any Agenda item will receive up to three (3) minutes unless the Chairman adjusts the time. Speakers are required to fill out a “Speaker Registration Form,” list the topic they wish to address, and hand it to the Staff member before the meeting begins. Please wait to be recognized by the Chairman and speak into a microphone. State your name and affiliation before commenting. During the discussion, Committee Members may direct questions to the speaker.

Please silence cell phones and digital devices. There may not be a break in this meeting. Please leave the room to conduct any personal business. All parties participating in the public meeting are to observe Robert's Rules of Order and wait to be recognized by the Chairman. Please speak one at a time and into the microphone so the Hearing Reporter can record all statements. The public is welcome to attend either in person or remotely.

Individuals who wish to participate remotely should register for the meeting using the Webex Meeting link: [October 21, 2026](#)

The registration deadline for the meeting is 6:00 p.m., October 21, 2026. Individuals who register will receive an email in advance of the meeting detailing how they can participate.

The Agenda Packet will be available on the Collier County Government website: [DAS Advisory Committee Meeting Packet](#).

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call – Establish a Quorum
3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. Approval of Agenda (**Action Item**)
5. Approval of Minutes (**Action Item**)
 - a. September 16, 2026, Meeting Minutes – *Attachment 1* *Page 3*
6. Public Comment– Items not addressed on this Agenda
7. Public Comment - Agenda Items in Sequence.

8. Staff Updates

a. Leadership Report - *Attachment 2*

i. September 2026 State Mandate Statistics*Page 7*

b. Fee Waived Adoption Events

c. Walking Schedule

9. Old Business

a. Sunshine Laws – *Attachment 3**Page 8*

b. Capital Projects & Facilities

i. Generator

c. Trolley Update – *Attachment 4**Page 9*

10. New Business

a. Risk Assessment – *Attachment 5**Page 10*

11. Advisory Board Member Comments

12. Adjourn

[To join the meeting without participating, click here.](#)

Future Meeting Dates:

November 18, 2026

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COLLIER COUNTY
DOMESTIC ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Naples, Florida
September 16, 2026

LET IT BE REMEMBERED that the Collier County Domestic Animal Services Advisory Committee, in and for the County of Collier, having conducted business herein, met on this date at 6 p.m. for a **MEETING** at Growth Management Community Development Department Room 609/610 2800 N. Horseshoe Dr. Naples, Florida, with the following members present:

CHAIRMAN: Allen Schantzen
VICE-CHAIR: Susan Mehas
Kelly Hyland
Victoria Redstall
Rebecca Morris
Jessica Orlando (absent)

Also present:
Diane Lynch, Growth Management, Management Analyst II

Any persons in need of the verbatim record of the meeting may request a copy of the audio recording from Domestic Animal Services.

- I. Call to order
- II. Roll Call- Establish a Quorum
A quorum of 3 was confirmed.
- III. Pledge of Allegiance
Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- IV. Agenda and Minutes

- a. Add “new business” to Agenda (add items to Agenda)

Motion to add an item (instance of a dog passing away in a car) to the agenda
- Kelly Hyland

Motion seconded- Victoria Redstall

Motion passed unanimously “to discuss” new item on agenda 3-0

b. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve Agenda as Amended – Rebecca Morris

Motion seconded- Susan Mehas & Victoria Redstall

Motion passed unanimously 3-0

c. Meeting minutes August 19, 2026

Motion to approve- Kelly Hyland

Motion seconded- Rebecca Morris

Motion passed unanimously 3-0

V. Public comments – Items not addressed on this agenda

Speakers:

- Mitch Rosenzweig – Licensed veterinarian volunteering his services
- Patti Tibbetts – appreciate the things that have been done for the facility however, there are many things that still need attention – concerned about volunteer “morale” and the “rules”, also suggested using social media to get more volunteers, etc. Appreciates the renovations that were done but, more is needed such as replacement of rusted kennel doors and new locks are needed, DAS needs to invest money for the betterment of the animals
- Lynn Cram – Re-evaluate dogs often to help the volunteers, would like a fan in play yard, fans are needed, it’s very, very hot

VI. Public comment- Agenda Items in Sequence

None.

VII. Staff Updates

a. Leadership Report

Statistics are contained within your packet.

b. Staffing

- New Assistant Director: The new assistant director has been hired her name is Joelylynn (goes by Joey) Cafaso is slowly working her way into the system.
- Acting Director Position: Meredith left and we have brought in Lisa Blacklidge. Lisa is a planner 3 here in the growth management, *acting* assistant director position and she is in the 90-day acting director position.
- Initiative Assistant: We are still hiring and we just hired a new initiative assistant who just started this week.
- Misc. Long term employee, Grace, is moving over to the clinic and Dr. Unz (sp?). As a manager she will be moving over to the clinic and Dr. Unz (sp?) and will be under Mr. French and the County Manager.
- Ms. Blacklidge helped us with the Chapter 14 re-write. The county is changing the ordinance effective October 1st to fall in line with the State of Florida changes to the law. DAS is keeping fine at \$250 but if the violation is egregious, it could be sent to a judge (or magistrate) for a fine of \$2,500 that can be imposed by the judge for a first offense, \$5,000 for a second, etc. That

would only be if referred to a judge and not just a fine by DAS. This is going to BCC next week, and it will be adopted in October.

VIII. Old Business
None.

IX. New Business

1. Summation of the Investigation into dog who perished in county vehicle – the Members would like to see the program come back for the betterment of the dogs.
2. Keep more communication with the members of the advisory committee
Send in (email) agenda items 2 weeks in advance

X. Advisory Committee Member comments

- Unknown Member commented on getting Patti Tibbetts's list of items completed and keeping members up to date
- Last meeting's minutes discussed more micro-chip readers in Collier – someone suggested scanners in fire stations, and more marketing with social media and marketing in Spanish newspapers
- When will the Safety Risk Assessment be presented – waiting for Lisa to come back from vacation
- Need transparency on the dog that passed away in the car – waiting on law enforcement to investigate
- **Kelly Hyland** – thanks to all volunteers
- **Allen Schantzen** – director search – looking in house and external
- **Concerns about Sunshine Laws** – Committee member will get with the county attorney and confirm if the Sunshine Laws apply to this committee until that is confirmed – proceed as if they do

XI. Next Meeting – October 21,2026

XII. Adjourn

Motion to approve- Susan Mehas
Motion seconded- Victoria Redstall
Motion passed unanimously 3-0

There being no further business for the good of the County, the meeting was concluded at 7:10 pm.

Collier County Domestic Animal Services Committee Meeting September 16, 2026

Allen Schantzen- Chairman

These minutes were approved by the Committee/ Chairman on _____ (check one) a
s presented _____, or as amended _____.

Animal Intakes from 09/01/2026 to 09/30/2026

	Cats	Dogs	Other	Total
Surrendered by Owner	3	31	1	35
Stray	499	92	11	602
Confiscated	0	0	0	0
Transferred from within Florida	1	0	0	1
Born in Shelter	0	0	0	0
Total	503	123	12	638

Animal Outcomes from 09/01/2026 to 09/30/2026

	Cats	Dogs	Other	Total
Adoption	127	60	6	193
Reclamation by Owner	6	36	1	43
Died in Care	12	2	3	17
Euthanasia at Owner's Request	1	12	0	13
Euthanasia by Court Order	0	0	0	0
Transfer to another public or private animal shelter	191	13	0	204
Euthanasia	12	4	1	17
Returned in Field/Trapped, Neutered, Returned (TNR)	141	0	0	141
Lost in Care/Missing Animals	0	0	0	0
Total	490	127	11	628

From: Colleen Greene <Colleen.Greene@collier.gov>

Sent: Thursday, September 17, 2026 12:10 PM

To: Diane Lynch <Diane.Lynch@collier.gov>

Cc: Thomas Iandimarino <Thomas.Iandimarino@collier.gov>; Lisa Blacklidge <Lisa.Blacklidge@collier.gov>; Tammy Althouse <Tammy.Althouse@collier.gov>

Subject: (RLS) DAS Advisory Committee (DASAC)

Hi Diane,

The DAS Advisory Board members are required to comply with Florida's Sunshine Law, Public Records Law, and Ethics laws.

Two or more members of the same advisory board cannot meet to discuss any matter that may foreseeably be discussed at the advisory board meetings outside of a publicly noticed meeting.

Yes, DAS Advisory Committee members are restricted from contacting each other to discuss issues/items listed under the Committee's functions, powers, and duties outside a scheduled meeting.

The advisory board can form a subcommittee to review specific matters, but the subcommittee must also comply with all requirements of the sunshine law which are (1) publicly noticed meeting; (2) open to the public; and (3) minutes must be taken. A county representative should always attend subcommittee meetings.

The CAO Sunshine Law presentation is available on our website, and I've attached our PowerPoint.

Please let me know if you would like me to attend a meeting to discuss these issues or to answer questions.

Thank you! Call me if you would like to discuss.

Colleen M. Greene
Managing Assistant County Attorney
239.252.8490

<https://www.collier.gov/files/assets/county/v/1/county-manager-operation/documents/county-attorneys-office/sunshine.pdf>

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Collier County Domestic Animal Services

Risk Assessment and Loss Analysis Report

Prepared For

Collier County Domestic Animal Services
Growth Management & Community Development Department
Collier County, Florida

Report Date

August 2026

Evaluation Periods

- Direct Onsite Operations Observation: July 6-10, 2026
- Loss Analysis: January 4, 2022 through July 22, 2026
- Benchmarking Analysis: FY2023 through FY2025

Prepared By

Wayne Flees, CSP
Risk Services Consultant, Sedgwick



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Description of Operations

Collier County Domestic Animal Services (DAS) is a governmental animal care and animal control agency responsible for animal shelter operations, animal intake and adoption services, rabies control, animal welfare investigations, and public education programs throughout Collier County, Florida. DAS is a division within Collier County's Growth Management & Community Development Department. Operations include receiving and housing stray, surrendered, abandoned, injured, and impounded animals; providing daily feeding, cleaning, enrichment, and basic care; coordinating veterinary evaluation and treatment; administering vaccination and sterilization programs; and facilitating animal adoptions, fostering, and owner reunification services.

Shelter operations involve animal handling, kennel cleaning and disinfection, waste management, laundry activities, recordkeeping, customer service, and interaction with volunteers, rescue organizations, veterinarians, and the general public. Veterinary and animal care staff may assist with examinations, vaccinations, medication administration, surgical preparation and recovery, euthanasia procedures when required, and the handling and restraint of animals of varying sizes and temperaments.

Primary workers' compensation exposures include animal bites, scratches, kicks, and other animal-related injuries; ergonomic strains from lifting, carrying, restraining, and moving animals, cages, and supplies; slips, trips, and falls in kennel and outdoor environments; exposure to zoonotic diseases, animal waste, cleaning chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and biological materials; vehicle-related exposures during field operations; and heat stress associated with outdoor animal control and shelter activities. Administrative personnel are primarily exposed to standard office and clerical hazards.

Animal Control Officers work closely with DAS, they report directly to Code Enforcement, a separate division within the Growth Management & Community Development Department. These field officers conduct animal control and code enforcement activities, including responding to public complaints, investigating animal welfare concerns, capturing and transporting stray or aggressive animals, handling wildlife referrals, enforcing county animal ordinances, and participating in emergency response situations involving animals. Employees regularly operate county vehicles while traveling throughout the service area and may use specialized animal handling equipment, control poles, traps, kennels, and transport vehicles.

Opinion of Risk

DAS's injury experience is characterized by a concentrated exposure to canine-bite incidents rather than a broad spectrum of workplace injuries. Over the past three fiscal years (FY23, FY24, FY25), canine bites accounted for 19 of 33 reported incidents. Canine bites account for 58% of incidents and approximately 95% of incurred losses. FY2024 represented the peak year for bite incidents, particularly among volunteers. Volunteer bite injuries subsequently declined substantially in FY2025, suggesting that corrective actions may have been effective. Employee bite incidents, however, remain elevated and continue to drive overall injury frequency. Future safety efforts should

prioritize canine behavior assessment, high-risk canine handling procedures, transfer protocols, employee training, and bite-prevention controls rather than general workplace safety initiatives.

The data identifies recurring injury patterns and opportunities for improvement within Collier County DAS, but the information provided does not support a statistically valid comparison to other county animal shelters.

- Bites and scratches are the dominant injury type.
- Most injuries occur during kennel handling, leashing, animal movement, restraint, and canine-to-canine interactions.
- Claim frequency is high, while severity is generally modest except for several significant canine-bite losses.
- Volunteer involvement was significant during FY2024, although exposure shifted primarily to employees during FY2025.
- Reactive canine incidents occur repeatedly.

Loss Analysis

(The following loss analysis is for the period 1/4/2022 – 7/22/2026 – which is the entirety of claims history provided to consultant. This analysis includes injuries which are not included in the Benchmarking section that follows this section – therefore, some figures/percentages will not align)

Collier County DAS's loss experience is not a *general workplace* injury problem – it is primarily an *animal-handling* injury problem.

Total incurred losses for the period is \$332,894.68. Canine bites represent 50% of claims but nearly 95% of incurred losses, with kennel transfers and redirected aggression serving as the most significant and recurring causes. (Table 1) Targeting those two exposures would likely generate the greatest reduction in future claim severity and total cost. Four Code Enforcement Division (ACOs) claims are included in the data for the same period.

DAS's losses are overwhelmingly driven by animal bite incidents, particularly canine bites.

- Canine bites account for 23 of 46 claims (50%).
- Canine bites represent approximately \$315,026 of \$333,895 total incurred losses (94.6%).
- Feline bites: eight of 45 claims (17.4% of all claims) and \$5,340 total incurred costs (1.6%).
- Motor vehicle accidents contributed \$3,167 in incurred losses from three claims.
- The 05/12/2024 canine bite (\$257,487) remains the dominant loss driver, accounting for roughly 77% of all incurred losses.

The loss experience is dominated by canine bites. While canine-bite incidents account for half of all claims (for this period), they account for nearly all of the incurred dollars (94.6%), making canine handling activities the dominant source of both injury frequency and claim severity. All other injury categories combined account for 22 claims (47.8%) but only \$17,868.86 (5.4%) of total incurred

losses. This indicates a high-severity, low-frequency exposure pattern, where a small number of serious canine attacks drive overall program costs. (Table 2)

Table 1. Losses by Injury Type (1/4/2022 – 7/22/2026)

Nature of Injury	Claims Frequency	Total Incurred
Canine Bite	23	\$315,026
Strain/Sprain	6	\$6,415
Feline Bite	8	\$5,340
Motor Vehicle Accident	3	\$3,167
Foreign Body in Eye	2	\$1,598
Feline Scratch	1	\$531
Twisted Ankle	1	\$468
Contusion	1	\$405
Loss of Consciousness (Heat Illness)	1	\$249

Table 2. Largest Claims (1/4/2022 – 7/22/2026)

Claim Number	Date	Nature and Activity	Total Incurred
10-05122415150	5/12/2024	Canine Bite (Kennel Entry/Exit)	\$257,487
10-12292517104	12/29/2025	Canine Bite (Redirected Aggression)	\$33,962
10-07202516581	7/20/2025	Canine Bite (Previous Bite History)	\$4,343
10-02262313730	2/26/2023	Canine Bite (Kennel Entry/Exit)	\$3,889
10-10132516921	10/13/2025	Strain/Sprain (Handling Large Canine)	\$3,482

Common Loss Drivers

1. Kennel Entry/Exit Activities repeatedly appear in claims:

Kennel entry/exits appear to be the single most hazardous routine task.

- Reaching into kennel to leash canines
- Removing canines from kennels
- Returning canines to kennels

2. Redirected Aggression

Several bites occurred when canines were:

- Interacting with other canines
- Responding to environmental stimuli
- Being separated during fights
- Redirecting aggression toward staff or volunteers

3. Volunteer Exposure

This suggests volunteer activities should be a major focus area for risk control.

- Entering kennel occupied by a canine
- Approaching unfamiliar canines or approaching canines walked by another person
- Walking canines that may be too aggressive for volunteer's given abilities
- Resource-guarding incidents that volunteers may have caused

4. Feline Handling Operations

Feline bites and scratches occur during:

- Cage transfers
- Intake activities (Vaccinations, injections, microchip scanning)
- These incidents are frequent but generally low severity.

Benchmarking Analysis

(The following Benchmarking Analysis is for the periods FY23, FY24, FY25. This analysis does not include injuries from FY22, which are included in the Loss Analysis section that precedes this section – therefore, some figures/percentages will not align)

The Total Case Rate (TCR) is a standardized measure of injury and illness frequency that allows organizations of different sizes to be compared on an equivalent basis. Using the methodology established by OSHA and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the TCR is calculated as the number of recordable injuries and illnesses multiplied by 200,000, then divided by the total hours worked during the period. The factor of 200,000 represents the hours worked by 100 full-time employees in a year (40 hours per week × 50 weeks per year × 100 employees). The formula is:

$$\text{TCR} = (\text{Number of Recordable Cases} \times 200,000) \div \text{Total Hours Worked}$$

Because the calculation normalizes injury experience based on exposure hours, it provides a more meaningful comparison than injury counts alone. It should be noted that the shelter's rates in this assessment were calculated using the OSHA/BLS TCR methodology and include both employee and volunteer hours and incidents. Further, since Collier County is exempt from OSHA recordkeeping requirements, information determining whether an injury is “OSHA recordable” was unavailable. As such, the consultant made assumptions for each injury regarding OSHA recordability. Injury claims resulting in \$0 incurred, were removed from the calculation – all others were included. As a result, they are not directly comparable to official BLS rates, but they provide a consistent internal measure of injury frequency over time and a useful basis for comparison with published benchmarks. Injuries involving Animal Care Officers were omitted from the calculation, as their labor hours were not available and inclusion would skew the outcome.

Obtaining valid benchmarking data for animal shelters is challenging because no widely available national injury database exists specifically for county-operated animal shelters or animal control agencies. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) classifies animal shelters within NAICS 812910, *Pet Care (except Veterinary) Services*, a broad category that also includes pet groomers, boarding kennels, trainers, pet sitters, and canine walkers. As a result, published industry total recordable case rates (TRC) may not fully reflect the unique exposures associated with shelter operations, such as handling stray or behaviorally challenged animals, animal intake activities, animal transport, and animal control functions. Likewise, BLS does not publish a separate injury rate for animal shelters, humane societies, or animal control organizations. To provide context, this assessment uses multiple benchmarks: *Local Government* (TCR 4.8) to reflect the shelter's public-sector ownership, *Pet Care (except Veterinary) Services* (TCR 5.8) because it is the only published industry category that

includes animal shelters, and *Veterinary Services* (TCR 10.8) as an industry comparison for animal-handling-intensive operations.

The Local Government benchmark is based on BLS ownership classification rather than a specific NAICS industry code. It provides a useful comparison for public-sector employers but does not reflect the unique animal-handling exposures present in shelter operations. Therefore, it is considered alongside the Pet Care (except Veterinary) Services (NAICS 812910) and Veterinary Services (NAICS 541940) industry benchmarks to provide additional context.

While none of these benchmarks perfectly represent a county animal shelter, together they establish a reasonable reference range and provide context for evaluating the shelter's injury experience relative to both public-sector employers and other animal-care operations.

Table 3. Domestic Animal Services – Total Case Rate

Fiscal Year	Hours Worked	Incidents	Total Case Rate
2023	37,141	10	53.8
2024	55,567	15	54.0
2025	61,461	8	26.0
3-Year Total	154,169	33	42.8

The shelter's calculated incident rate (Table 3) substantially exceeds published benchmarks, although direct comparison is limited by the inclusion of volunteer exposures, estimated recordability assumptions, and the absence of a valid county-animal-shelter benchmark.

The elevated frequency is driven primarily by canine-bite injuries, which accounted for approximately 58% of all reported incidents during the three-year review period. Canine-bite incidents remain the predominant loss driver, with employee canine-bite exposure representing the primary source of reported injuries. Consequently, the shelter's injury experience appears to reflect a specific animal-handling exposure issue rather than a generalized workplace safety deficiency.

Bottom Line

While Collier County Domestic Animal Services' calculated injury frequency exceeds available public-sector and animal-care benchmarks, both the claims analysis and incident data indicates that the shelter's losses are not driven by broad workplace safety deficiencies. Rather, injuries and claim costs are highly concentrated in animal-handling activities, particularly canine bites occurring during kennel entry/exit, animal movement, restraint, and interactions involving reactive canines. Canine bites account for the majority of reported incidents and nearly all incurred claim costs, making canine-handling exposures the most significant opportunity for risk reduction. Future efforts should focus on strengthening behavior assessment processes, identifying and communicating high-risk animal characteristics, enhancing employee and volunteer animal-handling competencies, refining kennel transfer and containment procedures, improving supervision and task assignment for higher-risk animals, and systematically reviewing bite incidents and near misses to identify recurring causes and corrective actions. Sustained attention to these areas is likely to provide the greatest reduction in both injury frequency and workers' compensation costs.

Recommendations

The recommendations contained in this section are intended to reduce employee and volunteer injuries, improve animal and public safety, strengthen operational consistency, and address the primary loss drivers identified through the assessment and loss analysis process. While implementation of all recommendations would provide the greatest overall benefit, management should prioritize those related to canine behavior assessment, handler competency, staffing, supervision, and policy enforcement, as these controls are expected to have the greatest impact on future injury prevention and workers' compensation loss reduction. Recommendations have been prioritized according to their anticipated impact on injury prevention, animal containment, public safety, and overall risk reduction, and should be considered as part of a coordinated risk management strategy. Sedgwick Risk Services remains available to assist management with implementation efforts, including program development, policy and procedure review, training support, safety committee development, incident review processes, and follow-up consultation related to the recommendations contained within this report.

Following the detailed discussion of each recommendation, a summary table is provided in the Appendix to assist management in planning and implementation. The table consolidates all recommendations and assigns each a Priority Level and Suggested Implementation Horizon based on its anticipated impact on injury prevention, animal containment, public safety, operational effectiveness, and overall risk reduction.

Detailed Recommendations

1. Implement comprehensive animal handling and behavior training requirements, equivalent to the training provided to Animal Control Officers.

Management should require all Animal Care Specialists to successfully complete and routinely refresh documented training in animal behavior assessment, safe animal handling techniques, incident prevention strategies, emergency response procedures, and the proper use of approved restraint equipment. Training should be standardized to ensure personnel can recognize behavioral warning signs, assess risk, safely manage animals with varying temperaments, and consistently apply appropriate handling and restraint methods. In addition, employees should receive practical instruction on responding to animal attacks and other high-risk incidents, including de-escalation techniques, emergency communication procedures, safe intervention methods, use of break sticks or other approved control devices where applicable, summoning assistance, and post-incident reporting requirements. Training should also include formal procedures governing animal movement, kennel transfers, intake processing, transport activities, safe animal separation techniques, and coordinated responses to animal escapes. Personnel should be trained to minimize opportunities for escapes through proper use of barriers, leash and restraint protocols, controlled movement practices, and effective communication among handlers, while also understanding their specific responsibilities during an escape event.

Animal shelter personnel routinely interact with animals whose medical history, behavioral background, stress levels, and prior experiences may be unknown, increasing the potential for bites, scratches, escapes, and other handling-related incidents. Comprehensive training helps employees identify signs of fear, anxiety, aggression, and overstimulation before incidents occur, while also ensuring personnel are prepared to respond effectively if an attack, escape, separation event, or other emergency develops. A documented training program establishes minimum competency expectations, promotes consistent handling practices, reduces the likelihood and severity of injuries to staff, volunteers, visitors, and animals, and helps ensure personnel are adequately prepared to safely perform their duties throughout the intake, care, treatment, transfer, and adoption processes.

2. Formalize a Canine Handler Leveling and Authorization Program

Management should formalize and document a canine handler leveling program that assigns staff and volunteers to defined handling levels based on demonstrated competency, training, experience, and successful evaluation. While canine behavior classifications are currently utilized to assess handling risk factors such as leash reactivity, handling sensitivities, barrier reactivity, fearfulness, resource guarding, and canine-to-canine interactions, it was not evident during the assessment that all personnel engaged in canine walking were similarly evaluated and assigned corresponding handler levels. The organization should establish a structured process for assessing, documenting, and periodically re-evaluating the capabilities of all staff and volunteers who handle canines. Handler assignments should be strictly aligned with canine behavior classifications, ensuring that individuals are only permitted to handle canines within their approved experience and competency level.

A formal handler leveling system helps ensure that the skills and experience of staff and volunteers are appropriately matched to the behavioral characteristics and risk profiles of the canines in their care. Shelter canines often present varying degrees of reactivity, fear, strength, stranger distrust, and other behaviors that can increase the potential for bites, escapes, falls, leash-pulling incidents, or canine-to-canine conflicts if handled by individuals lacking appropriate training or experience. By establishing documented handler classifications and requiring strict adherence to those assignments, management can create objective criteria for canine-walking eligibility, improve consistency in handling decisions, reduce reliance on individual judgment, and strengthen accountability throughout the organization. A structured leveling program can also provide a clear pathway for volunteers and employees to develop additional skills and advance to higher handling levels while helping reduce the likelihood of injuries to personnel, volunteers, visitors, and animals.

3. Establish Minimum Staffing Requirements for High-Risk Animal Handling Activities

Management should establish and enforce minimum staffing requirements for the handling of high-risk animals and the performance of higher-risk animal care activities. Canines exhibiting concerning behavioral characteristics, including aggression, severe leash or barrier reactivity, stranger distrust, resource guarding, handling sensitivities, or other elevated-risk behaviors, should not be managed by a single employee or volunteer when circumstances warrant additional support. Similarly, activities involving direct animal interactions, introductions, transfers, play-yard activities, intake processing, behavioral assessments, and other situations where animals may come into close

contact with people or other animals should be evaluated to determine appropriate staffing levels. At a minimum, designated higher-risk activities should require the presence of a second trained individual capable of providing assistance, intervention, and emergency response support if conditions deteriorate. Personnel assigned to these activities should have completed the organization's advanced animal handling and behavior training program, equivalent to the training provided to Animal Control Officers, and be authorized to handle animals at the applicable risk level.

4. Reinforce safety culture through consistent, documented policy enforcement

Management should consistently enforce established animal handling and safety procedures through active supervision, documented accountability measures, and progressive corrective action when violations are observed. During the assessment, personnel were observed engaging in practices that may increase operational and injury risks, including entering kennels without appropriate controls, leaving food in kennels, walking canines during lightning-related activity restrictions, handling canines above their designated experience level, walking canines in close proximity to other animals and pedestrians, and failing to adhere to established canine-walking protocols. Consistent enforcement of safety expectations is critical to maintaining a safe environment for employees, volunteers, visitors, and animals. Repeated or intentional violations should be addressed through documented coaching, retraining, and progressive disciplinary measures, as appropriate.

5. Retain a certified animal behavior specialist on staff, with expertise in domestic canine behavior, to assess behavioral risks and provide behavior risk classifications and recommendation regarding appropriateness of euthanasia.

Given the frequency and severity of historical canine bite claims and the likelihood for future incidents, a comprehensive evaluation by a qualified animal behavior specialist, specializing in domestic canine behavior is strongly recommended. Such professionals possess the expertise necessary to objectively assess behavioral patterns, identify underlying causes of aggression or other concerning behaviors, and evaluate the effectiveness of any previous training or management efforts. Their independent, evidence-based assessment can provide valuable insight into the canine's risk profile and help inform decisions regarding future management, rehabilitation potential, and overall safety. Without a specialized behavioral evaluation, decisions regarding the canine's disposition are often made from an emotional standpoint, without the benefit of a thorough understanding of the animal's behavioral condition and prognosis. The canine behavior specialist should be actively involved in all canine intake evaluations to identify behavioral concerns early, assess potential risks, and provide recommendations that inform handling, housing, training, and disposition decisions.

6. Strengthen Facility-Wide Animal Containment and Escape Prevention Controls

Management should conduct a comprehensive evaluation of facility-wide animal containment systems and implement enhancements where necessary to reduce the likelihood of animals escaping designated secure areas. The evaluation should include kennel gates and latches, perimeter fencing, transition zones, animal transfer routes, loading and unloading areas, vehicle

access points, and other locations where animals are moved between secured environments. Particular attention should be given to identifying pathways that could allow a loose animal to gain access to parking lots, roadways, adjacent properties, or other uncontrolled areas. During the assessment, it was noted that the south end of the staff parking lot lacks a physical containment barrier, creating a potential route through which a loose animal could enter the parking area and access the Sally Port, laundry and storage facilities, and other adjacent areas. Management should consider the use of secondary containment barriers, fencing improvements, controlled access gates, and other engineering controls to eliminate or reduce such escape opportunities. In addition, a formal inspection and maintenance program should be established to ensure containment infrastructure, including fences, gates, latches, kennel hardware, and transfer areas, is routinely inspected for wear, damage, malfunction, or deterioration and promptly repaired when deficiencies are identified.

7. Strengthen Public Access Controls and Supervision Within Animal Care and Operational Areas

Management should establish and enforce controlled access procedures for kennel buildings and other operational animal care areas to ensure members of the public, prospective adopters, and visitors are appropriately supervised while on shelter property. During the assessment, members of the public were observed within kennel areas without an apparent staff or volunteer escort, including in back-of-kennel service corridors intended for employee and volunteer access. These areas should be clearly designated as restricted through signage and other visual controls; however, physical locking of access routes is not recommended where it could hinder emergency evacuation. While public access is an important component of animal adoption and community engagement efforts, uncontrolled access to operational areas may expose visitors to animals with unknown or concerning behavioral histories, increase the potential for bites, scratches, animal escapes, disease transmission, or unauthorized animal interactions, and create distractions for personnel performing animal care duties. Access to animal housing and operational areas should be limited to authorized personnel or supervised visitors, with clear expectations regarding where public access is permitted and under what conditions.

8. Restrict nonessential staff access/traffic within animal intake areas during processing of newly arriving animals.

Management should consider opportunities to reduce nonessential personnel traffic within animal intake areas and establish access controls that limit entry to employees directly involved in intake, medical evaluation, vaccination, and animal processing activities. During the assessment, frequent pedestrian traffic and the presence of personnel without an apparent intake-related function were observed within animal intake work areas. Intake areas serve as critical control points where animals of unknown medical history, vaccination status, temperament, and disease exposure are initially evaluated and handled. The canine and feline intake processes require personnel to perform multiple time-sensitive tasks, including microchip scanning, physical examinations, vaccinations, parasite prevention, diagnostic testing, medical triage, and documentation within the shelter management system. These activities occur at a time when animals may be fearful, overstimulated,

injured, ill, or otherwise unpredictable. Excessive foot traffic, noise, congestion, and interruptions can distract personnel, interfere with workflow efficiency, increase stress on animals, and elevate the potential for handling incidents, procedural errors, animal escapes, or infectious disease transmission. Limiting access to essential personnel, establishing defined traffic patterns, and treating intake areas as controlled operational environments can improve focus during intake procedures, support compliance with established protocols, strengthen disease-control measures, and reduce operational risks to employees, volunteers, and animals. Personnel presence within intake areas should be based on operational necessity rather than convenience.

9. Establish formal safety communication and incident review processes

Management should establish formal safety communication mechanisms to ensure that hazards, incidents, safety concerns, and procedural expectations are routinely discussed with employees and volunteers. While the organization currently utilizes several communication forums, including email “official instruction” directives, “animal-of-concern” meetings, all-staff meetings, morning meetings, management meetings, and one-on-one discussions, no dedicated safety committee meetings or structured post-incident safety briefings were identified. Additionally, observations of routine meetings did not reveal substantive discussion of safety performance, recent incidents, near misses, emerging hazards, or injury prevention initiatives. Management should consider incorporating a recurring safety component into existing meetings and establishing periodic safety committee meetings involving representatives from management, staff, and volunteers. Following significant incidents, near misses, or procedural changes, targeted safety briefings should be conducted to communicate lessons learned, reinforce expectations, and identify opportunities for corrective action. Formal review procedures for bites, attacks, exposures, escapes, and significant near misses help identify root causes and corrective actions before similar events result in more serious consequences. A structured review process promotes continuous improvement, strengthens accountability, and ensures lessons learned are incorporated into training, procedures, and operational practices.

Consistent and visible communication is a critical component of an effective safety program. Dedicated safety discussions provide a structured opportunity to share information regarding recent incidents, animal handling risks, injury trends, procedural changes, and corrective actions before similar events recur. Formal safety briefings and committee meetings also encourage employee and volunteer engagement by providing a forum to raise concerns, identify hazards, and contribute to the development of practical solutions. In environments involving animal handling, where conditions and risks can change rapidly, regular safety communication helps reinforce expectations, improve situational awareness, strengthen accountability, and promote a proactive culture in which hazards are identified and addressed before they result in injury to personnel, volunteers, visitors, or animals.

10. Develop Formal Animal Transport, Loading, and Unloading Procedures and Training Requirements

Management should develop and implement written requirements, procedures, and training standards governing the transport, loading, and unloading of animals. These procedures should establish minimum expectations for personnel qualifications, animal assessment prior to transport,

vehicle and crate requirements, restraint methods, communication protocols, emergency preparedness, and staffing levels based on animal species, size, medical condition, and behavioral risk. Employees and volunteers assigned to transport duties should successfully complete documented training, including hands-on practical exercises, before independently participating in animal transport activities. Training should be consistent with the organization's broader animal handling and behavior training program and should include instruction on managing fearful, reactive, injured, or otherwise high-risk animals during transport operations.

Animal transport activities present unique hazards that differ from those encountered during routine shelter operations. Loading and unloading animals often occur in uncontrolled environments and require personnel to work in close proximity to animals that may be stressed, disoriented, fearful, injured, or unfamiliar with handlers. Without standardized procedures and training, these activities may increase the risk of bites, scratches, animal escapes, vehicle-related injuries, improper restraint, and delays in responding to emergencies. Formal transport procedures help ensure animals are assessed prior to movement, appropriate containment and restraint methods are utilized, and personnel understand their responsibilities before, during, and after transport activities. Training should include safe loading and unloading techniques, vehicle safety, animal-behavior recognition, emergency response actions, escape prevention measures, use of transport equipment, and communication requirements. Establishing clear operational standards and competency requirements can improve consistency, reduce preventable incidents, and help protect employees, volunteers, the public, and animals during all transport-related operations.

11. Establish Comprehensive Hazard Awareness, Infection Control, PPE, and Biosecurity Training Requirements

Management should develop and implement formal requirements, written procedures, and documented training programs addressing workplace hazards associated with animal shelter operations, including infection control, zoonotic disease prevention, biological and physical security measures, sharps handling, hazardous materials, and task-specific personal protective equipment (PPE). Training should clearly define required work practices, prohibited behaviors, PPE selection and use, hygiene expectations, exposure reporting requirements, and procedures for safely performing routine and higher-risk tasks. Personnel should receive initial and recurring training, with competency expectations documented and reinforced through active supervision. During the assessment, one employee was observed walking while carrying syringes in their mouth, albeit prior to use, indicating an opportunity to reinforce safe sharps handling practices and awareness of exposure hazards. Establishing comprehensive training and procedural requirements can improve hazard recognition, reduce opportunities for injury or contamination, strengthen infection-control and biosecurity efforts, and promote consistent compliance with safe work practices throughout shelter operations.

12. Develop and implement a comprehensive OSHA-aligned safety compliance program

Management should conduct a comprehensive review of workplace safety programs, policies, equipment, and facilities to identify and address gaps relative to generally accepted occupational safety standards, including applicable Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements and industry best practices. Although OSHA does not have direct jurisdiction over Florida county government employees, OSHA standards provide a well-established framework for identifying hazards, implementing controls, and maintaining a safe work environment. Areas observed during the assessment that may benefit from further evaluation and improvement include hazard communication, electrical safety practices, eyewash station inspection and maintenance, portable fire extinguisher accessibility, compressed-gas cylinder storage and securement, among other fundamental safety program elements. By systematically evaluating current conditions against recognized safety standards and correcting identified deficiencies, management can strengthen the overall safety program, improve employee awareness and accountability, reduce operational risk, and demonstrate a commitment to providing a safe working environment for employees, volunteers, and visitors.

13. Strengthen volunteer engagement, communication, and field-level support

Volunteers play a critical role in animal care, enrichment, handling, and adoption-related activities and are often exposed to many of the same operational hazards as employees. Effective volunteer programs rely on consistent communication, accessible training resources, and readily available support to ensure volunteers understand current procedures, safely perform assigned duties, and remain engaged in the organization's mission. Management should consider the effectiveness of current volunteer coordination practices and ensure volunteers have consistent access to a clearly identifiable, accessible resource for training, guidance, operational updates, and issue resolution. During the assessment, volunteers expressed uncertainty regarding where to obtain information, ask questions, or receive coaching on shelter procedures and expectations. While a Volunteer Coordinator position exists and is responsible for volunteer onboarding, training, support, ongoing feedback, and serving as the primary point of contact for volunteers, opportunities may exist to increase the visibility, accessibility, and day-to-day engagement of this function within shelter operations. Management should consider implementing regular volunteer briefings, scheduled field interactions, structured communication channels, and routine check-ins to ensure volunteers receive timely information and support.

14. Require all animal handlers to demonstrate sufficient English-language proficiency to effectively understand, communicate, and follow animal handling procedures, training instructions, safety protocols, and emergency response requirements.

Establishing minimum language competency standards ensure reduced risk of miscommunication, improved consistency in animal care and handling practices, and enhanced ability of personnel to recognize and appropriately respond to behavioral or safety concerns. Given the inherent risks associated with animal handling activities, all personnel responsible for the care, restraint, transport, or management of animals should possess sufficient English-language proficiency to understand and communicate written and verbal instructions, safety procedures, and emergency protocols.

Effective communication is critical to maintaining safe operations, ensuring consistent animal management practices, and reducing the potential for incidents arising from misunderstandings or misinterpretation of instructions.

15. Establish a Formal Inspection, Maintenance, and Replacement Program for Animal Handling and Safety Equipment

Management should establish a formal inspection, maintenance, and replacement program for animal handling and safety equipment to ensure critical tools remain in safe working condition and are removed from service when damaged, worn, or otherwise compromised. The program should include documented inspection frequencies, defined replacement criteria, reporting procedures for defective equipment, and clear responsibility for corrective actions. Equipment subject to periodic inspection should include, at a minimum, leashes, collars, harnesses, slip leads, catch poles, transport crates, kennel doors, latches, gates, guillotine doors, restraint devices, PPE, and other equipment used to safely manage animals and protect personnel.

Animal-handling equipment, including leashes, collars, harnesses, restraint devices, and transport equipment, should be inspected by users before each use and removed from service if deficiencies are identified. Kennel doors, gates, latches, containment barriers, and other critical infrastructure should be routinely inspected, with formal documented inspections conducted at least monthly. Equipment exhibiting signs of wear, damage, malfunction, or deterioration should be promptly repaired or replaced. Establishing defined inspection frequencies and replacement criteria can help prevent equipment failures that may contribute to animal escapes, handling incidents, employee injuries, or other operational disruptions.

16. Management should ensure supervisors maintain a consistent and visible presence within canine animal care and handling areas to monitor performance, provide real-time guidance, and training, reinforce safe work practices, and promptly address emerging concerns.

Management should consider supervisory responsibilities and staffing allocations to ensure supervisors are regularly present in operational areas rather than being routinely diverted to competing administrative or logistical tasks. Given the potential risks associated with animal handling activities, supervisory oversight should be enhanced to ensure volunteers and staff are adequately supported and monitored while performing their duties. A sustained supervisory presence in yards, kennels, and other animal handling environments can improve accountability, provide timely support to staff and volunteers, and enhance adherence to established safety procedures. Observations indicate that personnel are frequently working alone in animal yards and kennel areas, which may delay assistance during emergencies, increase the likelihood of unsafe work practices going uncorrected, and reduce opportunities for real-time guidance and intervention. Management should consider staffing and scheduling practices to ensure appropriate supervisory presence in operational areas, particularly during higher-risk activities involving canine handling, restraint, transfer, or behavioral assessment. Increased supervision ensure reinforced safe work practices, improved compliance with established procedures, and provide timely support when potentially hazardous situations arise.

17. Alternatives to chain-link kennel gates should be further evaluated and enhanced to reduce reach-through contact and related exposure risks.

Management should consider alternatives to traditional chain-link kennel gates to reduce the potential for animal-related injuries to staff, volunteers, visitors, and prospective adopters. While chain-link gates provide visibility and ventilation, their open design may allow animals and people to make unintended contact through the barrier. Personnel may be exposed to bite, scratch, or entanglement hazards when handling latches, cleaning kennels, or interacting with animals, while fingers, hands, or clothing can inadvertently extend through the fencing. Similar risks may exist for members of the public walking through kennel areas, particularly when viewing or selecting animals for adoption. Consideration should be given to kennel door systems that maintain visibility while providing greater physical separation, such as solid-panel doors, tempered glass or polycarbonate viewing panels, half-panel barrier doors, or other designs that limit reach-through contact. These modifications ensure reduced opportunities for injury while maintaining effective animal observation and promoting a safer environment for both employees and visitors.

18. Install privacy screening on all exterior canine play-area fencing.

Installation of privacy screening on exterior canine play-area fencing is recommended as a best practice to reduce canine stress, minimize fence-line reactivity, discourage direct public contact, and improve overall safety and security of outdoor animal housing and exercise areas. Use durable, UV-resistant privacy screening on the exterior side of chain-link fencing surrounding canine play-areas to a minimum height of 3 to 4 feet above grade. The screening should be securely attached and maintained in good condition to provide visual buffering, reduce public interaction with housed animals, and support a safer, lower-stress environment for both canines and staff.

19. Upgrade domesticated farm animal enclosures with fencing systems designed to meet the specific containment, behavioral, and welfare needs of each species.

DAS may respond to and impound livestock or other domesticated farm animals that are loose, stray, or running at large, apart from canines and cats. Examples of domesticated farm animals that may be found loose and handled by animal control or related authorities include: horses, cattle (cows, bulls, calves), goats, sheep, pigs and hogs, donkeys and mules, chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, among other domesticated poultry or livestock kept on the county's agricultural properties.

There are currently three pastures, in the southeast corner of the property, used for domesticated farm animals recovered throughout the county. These pastures are contained by chain-link fencing, similar to that in the canine areas. Chain-link fencing is not recommended for horses due to severe safety risks, and it is generally too weak for bulls without heavy reinforcement. Both types of animals require specialized fencing designed to withstand heavy physical pressure and prevent injuries.

For horses, hooves or metal shoes can easily get caught in the chain link diamond mesh. If they panic, the flexible fencing can tighten around the leg, resulting in broken bones, torn ligaments, or degloving injuries. Horses rubbing against or biting at the fence can sustain severe lacerations or tear their tongues on the wire mesh. Safer choices for horses include V-mesh (No-Climb) wire or heavy-duty wood rail. These fencing systems, coupled with a highly-visible, electric wire, are highly effective.

For cattle and bulls, a perimeter barrier that can withstand heavy leaning, pushing, and testing is highly recommended. The recommended best fencing is a high-tensile fixed-knot wire mesh (e.g., a 9-49-6 configuration: 9 horizontal wires, 49 inches tall, with 6-inch vertical stays). Paired with a top strand of electric wire for a total height of 55+ inches, it absorbs immense pressure without buckling.

Note that these fencing systems are not interchangeable. Horses may injure themselves in a cattle enclosure and cattle may defeat and escape fencing designed for horses.

20. Implement an onsite lightning detection and notification system

Management should consider and invest in an onsite lightning detection and notification system to provide real-time, site-specific monitoring of lightning activity and support timely suspension of outdoor operations when hazardous weather conditions are present. During the assessment, it was reported that the facility currently relies on a neighboring property's lightning alarm system as a trigger for weather-related operational restrictions. While this arrangement may provide some level of warning, it does not afford the shelter direct control over the monitoring system, notification process, maintenance, testing, or alert thresholds. As a result, personnel may be dependent on an external source that was not specifically designed to support shelter operations or the unique risks associated with outdoor animal handling activities. An onsite system would provide immediate, location-specific alerts and establish objective criteria for initiating lightning shutdown procedures, helping ensure consistent and timely protection of employees, volunteers, visitors, and animals. Such a system would strengthen the shelter's overall emergency preparedness program and provide a more robust engineering control for an environmental hazard that cannot otherwise be eliminated.

21. Further Develop and Formalize Comprehensive Emergency Preparedness and Continuity of Animal Care Program

Management should review, enhance, document, train on, and periodically exercise a comprehensive emergency preparedness and continuity of animal care plan designed to address natural disasters and other large-scale emergencies that may affect shelter operations. Given the facility's location in Southeast Florida, the plan should specifically address hurricanes, tropical storms, flooding, tornadoes, prolonged power outages, extreme heat, and other severe weather events. The program should establish clear roles and responsibilities, evacuation and shelter-in-place criteria, animal relocation procedures, transportation resources, emergency staffing requirements, communication protocols, mutual-aid agreements, supply management, and recovery operations. Particular consideration should be given to maintaining adequate care for animals that may remain onsite during an emergency, including provisions for food, water, medications, sanitation, veterinary care, climate control, and staffing continuity. The plan should also define animal identification and tracking procedures, emergency intake protocols, and contingency arrangements with partner shelters, veterinary facilities, foster networks, and emergency management agencies. Regular drills, tabletop exercises, and post-exercise evaluations should be conducted to validate the effectiveness of the plan and identify opportunities for improvement.

APPENDIX: Recommendations and Prioritization Classifications

The following table summarizes the recommendations contained in this report and is intended to serve as a planning and prioritization tool for management. Recommendation numbers correspond directly to the detailed recommendations presented in the preceding section and may be used as a cross-reference when evaluating implementation strategies, resource requirements, and progress toward completion. Priority classifications are based on injury potential, animal escape potential, and likelihood of occurrence, rather than administrative convenience.

Priority classifications are as follows:

- **Critical (0-6 months):** Conditions that present a significant risk of serious injury, animal attack, animal escape, or life-safety consequences and warrant immediate management attention.
- **High (0-6 months):** Controls that materially reduce the likelihood or severity of injuries, animal escapes, operational disruptions, or other significant exposures.
- **Moderate (6-18 months):** Improvements that strengthen safety systems, communication, consistency, supervision, and overall risk management effectiveness.
- **Long-Term (18+ Months):** Capital improvements, infrastructure projects, or program enhancements that may require planning, design, budgeting, procurement, or phased implementation.

No.	Recommendation	Priority
1	Animal Handling & Behavior Training	Critical
2	Canine Handler Leveling Program	Critical
3	High-Risk Animal Staffing Requirements	Critical
4	Safety Policy Enforcement & Accountability	Critical
5	Canine Behavior Specialist	Critical
6	Animal Containment & Escape Prevention	High
7	Public Access Controls	High
8	Restrict Nonessential Traffic Within Intake Areas	High
9	Safety Communication & Incident Reviews	High
10	Animal Transport Procedures & Training	High
11	Hazard Awareness, PPE & Biosecurity Training	High
12	OSHA-Aligned Safety Compliance Program	High
13	Volunteer Support & Communication	Moderate
14	Require English Language Proficiency for Animal Handlers	Moderate
15	Equipment Inspection & Replacement Program	Moderate
16	Enhance Supervisory Presence and Operations Engagement	Moderate
17	Safer Kennel Gate Systems	Long-Term
18	Install Privacy Screening on Play-Area Fencing	Long-Term
19	Farm Animal Containment Upgrades	Long-Term
20	Onsite Lightning Detection System	Long-Term
21	Emergency Preparedness & Continuity Planning	Long-Term